

I know there must be a lot of Vermonters and Vermont admirers scattered around in the United States and other foreign countries. I am pretty sure more than 99% are hankering to get to Vermont, somehow. May I suggest you keep in touch with the home state? We have a pretty good way to do that . . . you can join our Vermont Historical Society and receive free our excellent Vermont Historical Quarterly Magazine. Send me your name and address, and if you are of good moral character and can prove you were born in Vermont or are sorry you were not, I, as one of the vice-presidents of this 113 year old society, will be glad to nominate you for membership."

Our thanks, sir. May your tribe increase, and your battered store till jangle merrily!

P. S. Other VHSers in business who follow Mr. Orton's theory of a good deed will find that in this world of misdeeds we know, too, what a good deed is!

VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MONTPELIER, VERMONT.
Leon S. Gay, President; Dr. Arthur W. Peach, Director and Editor.

VHS *News and Notes*

VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Montpelier, Vermont

See, 34.66
P. L. & H.

OUR STORY OF THE MONTH

Another One about President Coolidge

It is difficult to separate myth, legend and fact in Calvin Coolidge stories; and there is some evidence showing that he made it a point to refuse to comment on stories attached to him.

A Washington bank—in some versions a Boston one—invited him to honor the bank with a deposit. Without changing his expression, the President suggested the bank make him an honorary depositor. The banker missed the point, but Coolidge did make a deposit.

Later on, while he was walking past the bank with a friend, both heard a tremendous noise in the bank. President took the sound in stride, but his friend exclaimed:

"What in hell is that racket?"

Coolidge was not disturbed, kept his even pace, and remarked in his laconic Yankee fashion:

"My deposit drawing interest."

THE VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MONTPELIER, VERMONT

News & Notes

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

Volume 2

May 1951

Number 9



THE PIONEER MOTHER — HER PLACE IN THE SUN

Some Comments in Passing

The young pioneer mother, wife, or sweetheart who left her comfortable home in the long-settled areas of the older colonies, particularly in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and journeyed into the wilderness that was Vermont, has never found her rightful place in the sun, as far, certainly, as Vermont history is concerned.

The general pattern of her journey and her life we know, but not much more than in traditions and in brief glimpses of her through faded records. In Ann Story, whose story was told eloquently, vividly

and accurately in the *Vermont Quarterly*, July 1950 (copies are still available at \$1), we have the picture of such a life; but Ann represented the heroine type. Hundreds of other young women faced hardships and actual suffering in many cases that will never be recorded. Nevertheless, the story of their lives and days should be and must be told, as far as possible, and we hope to do it.

By way of bringing such lives into focus, we have in the journey of the Rev. John Williams and his fellow prisoners through Vermont from the massacre at Deerfield, Mass., (*Quarterly*, April 1951) the massed incidents and reactions that reveal



actual conditions the captured women faced, conquered or suffered in death. Also, in the capture and journey of Mrs. Johnson (*News and Notes*, April 1951) again the vivid picture emerges that indicates the downright courage and faith of a pioneer woman.

However, while the threat of Indian attack, capture, and tribulation far beyond our powers to grasp in these days, haunted the days of early pioneers, such occurrences were not daily, and there was the problem of mere living — food, clothing, shelter, and beyond and above all the care of children. As some one has remarked, "Where the pioneer mother buried a child near her cabin, that cabin became forever home in her memory if not in her life; and where there was not death — yet they were many through the pioneer years — there were the flowers, grown from the precious seeds she brought from her girlhood home, and planted near the cabin."

So it is with the lives lived from day to day, year to year, that we are really concerned. The Rev. Nathan Perkins in 1789, when Indian raids were no longer to be feared, wrote frankly of the pioneer women he saw (*Quarterly*, January 1951): "... and the women more contented than ye men — turned tawny by ye smoke of ye log-huts — dress coarse, & mean, nasty, ragged . . . when I go from hut to hut, from town to town, in ye wilderness, ye

people nothing to eat, — to drink, — or wear, — all work, & yet ye women quiet, — serene, — peaceable, — contented, loving their husbands, — their home, wanting never to return . . . tough are they, brawny their limbs, — their young girls unpolished — and will bear work as well as mules." And then he adds the sentence that is most revealing: "Woods make people love one another and kind and obliging and good natured. They set more by one another than in ye old settlements. Leave their doors unbarred. Sleep quietly amid flees — bed bugs — dirt and rags."

No matter how much, for various reasons, we discount the Reverend's impressions, the basic truth is evident, but the whole history of the real achievement of the Vermont pioneer woman is not in such records; we must find them elsewhere. The history of each town, practically, shows the significance of one or more women in the early life and growth of the town or region.

We are asking the State Federation of Women's Clubs which has a long annual of real achievement in the state to aid us as a state organization and through the local town clubs. Local historical societies will be asked to assist, as will other groups and individuals; and we hope to give our pioneer women of long ago their deserved place in the sun.



HOW MANY WOULD YOU SAY?

The First List of Century Farms

How many farms are there in Vermont, a century old or more, each one of which has been in the possession of one family for such a length of time? Think of the changes that can come to one family in a hundred years; and then what you have heard — "Oh, most of the young men went West after the Civil War" or "There is always a change in farming, the life is so hard," and so on.

As a matter of fact, the committee in charge of the Century Farm Program representing the State Grange, Farm Bureau, and our Society, has located 236 such farms. The state papers were generous in assisting us in seeking the farms and in publishing the results of our search which were announced on April 23. Here is the way these farms were distributed in the state: Addison Cty.—18; Bennington Cty.—4; Chittenden Cty.—15; Caledonia Cty.—37; Essex Cty.—3; Franklin Cty.—25; Grand Isle Cty.—no farms listed; Lamoille Cty.—4; Orange Cty.—25; Orleans Cty.—15; Rutland Cty.—12; Windham Cty.—34; Windsor Cty.—22.

Since the publication of the complete list as of April 23, additional farms have been sent in. Since many of our members aided us in the search, a final list will be published later in the *Quarterly* after careful checking. It is obvious that the history of these farms is a vital part of the history

of the state, and the search for them will be continued.

The *Rutland Daily Herald* pointed out in an editorial that there is reason to believe that such farms showed such a permanence because the owners through the years kept up with advances in farming methods and practices. The *Herald* also quoted our Director's comment:

"If the Society can secure the funds, we shall print all of the data concerning our century-old farms and make their history generally available, for such historical material is of lasting value. Most of us move from tenement to tenement, apartment to apartment, house to house in ceaseless change. Our roots never grow deep; and it is my opinion that these century-old farms, scattered through the state, and many we did not locate, perhaps, represent a solid base of living and traditions that go far to account for the sturdiness of the state and its nationally-envied security."

SINCLAIR LEWIS AND HIS VERMONT LOAN

The Inside Story

The Nobel Prize Medal won by Sinclair Lewis in 1930 reposed for a while in our Museum, and then was recalled. Since this fact was carried far and wide in various news stories and articles about him and his work, appearing after his death,

queries have come to us concerning the incident.

Actually, Lewis had a warm regard for Vermont, and he was generous in responding to invitations to speak at various gatherings. His informal talk at the dinner of the Rutland Rotary Club, Sept. 23, 1929, and printed in the *Rutland Daily Herald* on the 24th is still remembered by those who heard it, and it can be read in *Vermont Prose: A Miscellany*, one of the *Green Mountain Series* on sale by VHS. Vermonters who visited him at his summer home in Barnard found him congenial and co-operative in Vermontish visiting.

According to Harrison Smith, a life-long friend of Lewis, writing in the *Saturday Review of Literature* Jan. 27, 1951, Lewis planned to give the medal to the Yale Library; and here is his story of what happened:

On meeting the Yale librarian, Mr. Smith made his "little speech. 'Dr. Rush, this is Sinclair Lewis, and I am an editor of Harcourt, Brace, his publishers. We have both come to Yale from which we have both graduated to give you for your great library—' at this point Lewis flashed the gold medal, which looked as large around as a grapefruit, in front of the astonished man's eyes and I added at the proper moment—the medal of the Nobel Prize in Literature.'

"The performance was perfect theatre, but, like some of Lewis's dramatic ventures later, it was a complete failure. 'Are you interested in our collection of medals?' Rush asked. 'I can have you taken to see them.' At that point Lewis blew up. I had never seen him so mad. The librarian would not be convinced, nor did he even look at what was under his nose. We left, we fled down the marble stairs, and drove in silence for the next fifty miles. Lewis deposited the medal with the Vermont Historical Society as a temporary loan, and it is now on permanent exhibit in the Yale Library, along with most of his manuscripts."

Vrest Orton, one of the Society's vice presidents, was one of Lewis's personal friends, and that friendship was instrumental in the fact that the medal came to us on a temporary basis.

VERMONT TOWN MEETING HAS A LAST SESSION

An Interesting Magazine Passes

High costs and the failure of Vermonters and others to rally to the support of the magazine *Vermont Town Meeting* have resulted in its departure from the Vermont journalistic scene.

The idea back of the publication seemed to be a happy one — to make it possible for Vermonters in their own way, both the average citizen and state leaders, to discuss vital issues in a general free-for-all atmosphere. Mr. Mark O'Dea of Woodstock, an experienced editor and public relations counsel, with a keen interest in Vermont, established the magazine and gamely carried it on in the face of increasing problems that were too much to master in the end. In better times the magazine undoubtedly would have gone on to a long and useful life.

However, Mr. O'Dea, a member of VHS, has kindly given us two sets of the fourteen issues of *Vermont Town Meeting*, and we are thankful for them. Unique in viewpoint, format, and matter, they form a clear index to points of view held by Vermonters during these tumultuous years. One set will be kept in reserve for the future; the other will be indexed and put into service. From long experience we know that such a magazine will be consulted far beyond the lifetimes of those who publish it; so we place it in our library resources. Vermont and an interest in its story abides; we vanish.

UNNATURAL HISTORY NOTES FROM FIDDLER'S REST

The Rarest and Least Known of Vermont Fauna

The tall-story teller has long been a fixture in the general country store in Vermont and in other haunts, for that matter, from pioneer days on. He belongs to the Vermont historical tradition, and may his number never grow less!

Our wild life, which includes the Vermont panther of course, still has a future or rather a past. Professor Burges Johnson, writing from his home, Fiddler's Rest, Stamford, Vt., adds a few scientific facts to our wildlife lore in what he calls "Unnatural History Notes." Here they

are as he wrote them:

No one who is truly interested in wild life has failed to hear of Vermont's hoop snakes which put their tails in their mouths and roll down hill after their victims. They are of course harmless, but they seem to gain actual pleasure from causing fright at picnics or other secular outdoor gatherings. They have been reported from such widely scattered sections of this country (far further afield than they could have rolled), that evidently migrating Vermonters have carried specimens with them. Your correspondent would be glad to have any testimony in support of this theory.

Far less widely known are the little rubber-neck owls (*otus ridulosus*) which are frequently found near isolated farms, and are notable for their intense curiosity. In my boyhood I captured more than one specimen by luring it toward a tree-stump or small boulder. Waving a bright cloth was usually effective. When it perches on a stump, one can walk very slowly around it so that it continually turns its head in one direction, until it wrings its own neck. By seizing it as soon as it falls unconscious, one may untwist the neck and save its life. Because of the little creature's gratitude, it easily becomes a household pet.

The riverter raven is one of the rarest and least known of Vermont fauna. I have had first-hand knowledge of only one specimen in my life-time, though I have seen traces of others. Ornithologists disagree as to whether it is more nearly related to the crow or the falcon family. It is black in color, and is both carnivorous and predatory. Many specimens may have been seen and mistaken for crows. It has the heavy curved beak of a parrot, and subsists entirely (so far as is known) on woodpeckers and sapsuckers. It lurks patiently inside hollow trees, waiting for a woodpecker to drill through the trunk, and some scientists believe that it lures its victim by making a noise like a worm. When the woodpecker's beak protrudes through the trunk of the tree, the riverter raven seizes it and bends it over, thus imprisoning the poor bird which can be devoured at leisure.

CENTURY AWARDS TO VERMONT BUSINESSES

Twenty Businesses Receive Awards

The Associated Industries of Vermont and our Society joined in awarding special citations to Vermont firms and companies which have been continuously in business since 1850. The awards were made at a banquet in the Woodstock Inn, Woodstock, October 24, 1950. We hoped to present a brief history of each company in the *Quarterly*, but since more time is needed than we planned, and since members have asked for the names of the firms, here they are:

H. N. Sawyer, Whitingham, 1804; Rixford Manufacturing Company, East Highgate, 1812; Eagle Square Manufacturing Company, So. Shaftsbury, 1817; Parks & Woolson Machine Co., Springfield, 1826; Gray Foundry, Inc., Poultney, 1828; Cross Baking Company, Inc., Montpelier, 1826; Fairbanks, Morse & Company, St. Johnsbury, 1829; Smith, Whitcomb & Cook Co., Barre, 1833; Cooley-Wright Manufacturing Corp., Waterbury, 1834; True Temper Corp., Wallingford, 1834; Jones & Lamson Machine Company, Springfield, 1835; A. G. Dewey Company, Inc., Quechee, 1836; Newton & Thompson, Inc., Brandon, 1836; Adams Paper Company, Wells River, 1812; Johnson Woolen Mills, Johnson, 1842; Estey Organ Corp., Brattleboro, 1846; Swanton Lime Works, Inc., Swanton, 1847; Central Vermont Railway, Inc., St. Albans, 1843; Rutland Railroad Company, Rutland, 1843; Boston and Maine Railroad, Boston, 1849; National Life Insurance Company, 1850.

REMEMBER THE OLD STEREOSCOPES?

A Worthy Project to a Worthy End

Those who knew the old days when you could look through a stereoscope saw a world that is on the way to oblivion — but it should be rescued. One of our members, Mrs. Byron Dexter (200 East 66th St., New York 21 — summer Wicklow Farm, South Woodstock) is interested in collecting slides; and her letter phrases her quest more effectively than we could do it.

The letter:

Many members of the Historical Society

might be surprised to know what a wealth of pictorial material on Vermont exists in the form of photographic slides for old stereoscopes. A Mr. Gage of St. Johnsbury made the first ones in the state in 1859. The most productive years were between 1866 and 1876 when dozens of local and traveling photographers made views for the parlor tables of Victorian Vermonters.

I have collected all kinds of stereo pictures for years and Vermont subjects especially, and by this time have a fairly complete file of all the photographers and about a thousand views — all cross-indexed as to place and subject. My aim now is to make a check list of everything that can be found in libraries and private accumulations scattered around the state. Perhaps through the Historical Society a plea could be made for information and lists. If anyone cares to sell what they have I will gladly buy them, of course, but my primary object would be to find just what there is.

I spoke to John McDill, curator, VHS, about all this and he was most encouraging. He says that you people are wizards at uncovering hidden treasures. Luckily, this stereoscopic material is really not scarce. Slides were made in great numbers and many survive. In every town there was at least one good photographer who did an off-season business in view taking. They photographed the village streets, stores, exterior and interior, hotels, schools often with groups of children, Victorian mansions, farmsteads, covered bridges, mills, quarries, lumbering, sugaring, factories, railroads, steamers, picnics, camp meetings, not to mention of course beauty spots, mountains, waterfalls, river and lake scenery, churches and monuments. Stereo views from Vermont, in fact, are more numerous and varied than those from almost any other part of the country, and full of human interest.

I have a goodly batch of duplicates which I will exchange or give to any local collection where they will be appreciated. It is my intention eventually to give my full Vermont collection to the Historical Society Museum—together with all the files and lists. I'm sure there is valuable 19th Century material in it. Do help me track down accumulations of views while

they can still be found in almost any attic.

MORE VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETIES Barre and Rockingham

We are trying to assemble a complete list all active local historical societies in the state; and we hope some officer of each society will see to it that the names of the officers of each are forwarded. We hope to plan for an annual meeting of officers, delegates, or members of each Society in Montpelier in order to become acquainted and also organize activities which will be of mutual and state benefit.

Miss Joseph Chiaravalli (VHS) kindly sends us the officers of the Barre Historical Society: President, Mrs. Florence Tilden; first vice president, Mrs. Rachel Milne; second vice president, Mrs. Edna More; secretary-treasurer, Miss Joseph Chiaravalli; assistant, Mrs. Mildred Phelps; auditor, Rev. Mabel T. Winch; directors, Mrs. Cora Cumming, Mrs. Pearl Reid. The address of each is Barre, Vt.

The Old Rockingham Meeting House Association was founded in 1911. It conducts an annual pilgrimage to the Rockingham Meeting House. Mrs. Gertrude Daniels (VHS), a vice president, sends us the list of officers: President, Henry A. Stoddard; vice presidents, Natt L. Divoll, Almon I. Bolles, Mrs. Fred H. Babbitt, Mrs. Charles Daniels, Paul C. Roundy; secretary, Louie J. Divoll; treasurer, Roland Belknap; librarian, Imogene Parker. (The address of each is Bellows Falls, Vt., with the exception of Mrs. Daniels, Grafton, Vt., and Mr. Roundy, Hudson, Ohio.) Executive committee: Rev. Gardner Cottle, Mrs. F. A. Bolles, Miss Jessie Judd (Westminster, Vt.), W. I. Mayo (Westminster), Grafton L. Wilson and Charles H. Wright (Grafton), Paul Adams, and Rev. Frederick Knox (Chester, Vt.). Ralph Flanders and Maitland Lovell (Springfield, Vt.), Oliver Hubbard and Mrs. A. M. Bragg (Walpole, N. H.), Oscar Gast and W. H. Proctor (Charlestown, N. H.), H. L. Estabrook and Harry Bennett (Alstead, N. H.). Members-at-large: Geo. Grafton Wilson, (Grafton, Vt.) and Rev. John G. Currier (Putney, Vt.) (Address is Bellows Falls unless otherwise noted).

HERE HE IS AGAIN

And He's To Stay

The "Vermont panther" has refused to stay dead, and our Director has abandoned all further efforts to scotch him for good. The *Burlington Free Press* implied that Dr. Peach was old enough to know better, that the "panther" was as perennial in Vermont as Santa Claus and just as highly esteemed, and Dr. Peach has agreed, somewhat reluctantly, that the *Free Press*, for once at least, seems to be right.

To add to the fun or fracas or scientific research into this aspect of Vermont folklore — it is that — the veteran scholar and historian, John Spargo, Director-Curator of the Bennington Historical Museum and Art Gallery, a former president of VHS and a loyal member, entered the fray with a brochure, *The Catamount in Vermont*, [Bennington, 1950.]

Mr. Spargo says: "The fierce, little known quadruped called the catamount holds a place of prominence in the literature and lore of Vermont that can be fairly called remarkable in the light of the fact that, of all the wild animals known to have had their habitat in the State at any time in its history, it is and has ever been the rarest and least known." He goes on to point out that the wolf was "an economic menace," but "the animal commonly called 'painter' or 'panther', but also called 'catamount,' was never numerous in this region. From the first passage of white man of which we have any record through what is now Vermont down to the present time, a stretch of a little more than two hundred years, all the animals of this species positively known to have been killed do not number a score. The authenticated killings of catamounts since the first settlements near the last third of the eighteenth century are less than half that number. Even vague and uncertain 'traditions' of such killings would add less than as many more."

Mr. Spargo proceeds to ask how, in view of the rarity of the animal, the panther holds such a conspicuous place in our lore. His answer is that in the old days of the land disputes between New York and the New Hampshire Grants, a catamount was killed near the foot of Mount Anthony. It was stuffed, fastened to the top of a

signboard of the little tavern run by Stephen Fay so that it faced westward toward New York. "This was a symbolic act. They said the beast was grinning defiance to the 'Yorker'."

Mr. Spargo considers the following killings a matter of record: a catamount in Roxbury, Vt., 1821; one in Weathersfield, 1867; one in Wardsboro, 1875; one in Barnard, 1881 — "What is believed to have been the last killing of a catamount in Vermont."

There are "vague traditions of panther hunts and killing that are part of the folklore of some of our towns," as the author states, and he is indeed correct in his assumptions, for such "traditions" and tales are coming to the Society steadily. Mr. Spargo locates one in Dorset — what he calls "The Painter and the Frightened Lover" tale — the story of a lad on the way to see his sweetheart, about 1778-1779, who saw a panther and fled homeward, away from the lass instead of to her. "Only a terrible cynic would suggest," the author comments, "that man and beast probably ran in opposite directions, each from the other!" There is also the tradition of the shooting of a panther in St. Albans, date not given by the author.

The brochure also clarifies a number of commonly held conceptions about the Catamount Tavern marker; and we will mention these in a later issue. For the time being, we welcome the old stories and questions that are coming in about panthers in Vermont; and we state also that although our Director has surrendered, he still is certain that all panthers in Vermont are dead and gone and that they exist merely in people's imagination; and he reminds "pantherites" that the \$100 reward for a Vermont panther delivered in Montpelier or exhibited on the spot of its death with ample evidence that removes all doubt of its origin, its status, character, and its end, still holds!

VHS IS REMEMBERED — GIFTS CONTINUE

Gifts Received February — April 1951

Town of Andover through Mr. Albert B. Kellogg, Andover; Allen Brenner, New Rochelle, N. Y.; Mrs. Charles Conklin, Cambridge, Mass.; Charles E. Crane,

Montpelier; Miss Florence Corry, Montpelier; Louis Diven, Reading; Dr. Lester W. Fish, Los Angeles; Senator Ralph E. Flanders, Springfield; Wm. R. Folsom, Chicago; F. W. Fowler, Hamden, Conn.; Franklin County Historical Society through Mrs. Ruth A. Leach, Enosburg; Ralph N. Hill, Burlington; H. H. Jackson, Barre; Fay Jacobs, Guilford; Mrs. Maitland Jenkins, Bradford; Abraham Kamer, Brooklyn; Mrs. Winifred Lovering-Holman, Lexington, Mass.; Mrs. Everitt Marrs, Richmond; L. Miller, St. Petersburg; National Life Insurance Co., Montpelier; Miss Mary O. Pollard, Middlebury; Harold G. Rugg, Hanover, N. H.; Miss Mildred Sawyer, Wianno, Mass.; Mrs. Ralph Shrader, Boston, Mass.; Charles D. Stevens, Lyndonville; Robert A. Tompkins, Washington, D. C.; Mrs. Tennie Gaskill Toussaint, Danville; Miss Marjorie Wait, Wilmette, Ill.; Mrs. E. B. Benedict, Burlington; Association of American Railroads.

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Sec. 34.66
P. L. & R.

OUR STORY OF THE MONTH

A Civil War Issue is Settled

The Hon. Arthur G. Follette of Weston does not know the source of this story—nor do we—but knowing the ancient rivalry between Vermont and Massachusetts in elder days, we hope that the tale is true.

At one time during the Civil War several regiments, encamped and inactive, were visited by a travelling preacher who held rousing revival services. He called on the Colonel of a Vermont regiment, and boasted in the course of the conversation that he had already baptized 25 men in the Nth Massachusetts Regiment. The Colonel listened grimly, then turned to his Adjutant and said briskly: "Adjutant, detail 50 men to be baptized. I won't have any damned Massachusetts regiment outdo mine for piety!"

A. W. P.

News & Notes

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

Volume 2

June 1951

Number 10



A CENTURY FARM STORY

by

Tennie Gaskill Toussaint

In gathering data for our Century Farm project, Mrs. Toussaint, historically wise, also harvested stories, tales, and incidents which have a definite interest and meaning. We hope to offer our readers other sketches as the year passes. Editor.

While collecting facts in the town of Danville for the Century Farm project, I assembled various bits of information aside from the statistical data required on the forms issued by the Society.

Among the historical facts, places, folklore and family stories were two of especial interest about Indians.

The family records of the twelve Century Farms verified in Danville traced back from 1846 to 1788 through recorded farm deeds. Several of the farms were known to have been in the possession of descendants of the same families for even longer periods but without record.

Anyone reading these early dates might say, "Why, there must have been Indians around then!" On one farm, at least, there really were Indians.

In a small leather brass-studded trunk in the old farmhouse attic Mr. and Mrs.